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Onge

122 torches for hunting by night. There were pigs everywhere. In half an hour we often got
114 six or more of them. At Chemalê, far from the coast, we had eleven in a few minutes for
[134] distribution to everybody, including roaming Onge. Pigeons and ducks also were often plentiful. The simple pleasures of hunting incited everyone to a spontaneous daily struggle through the dense forest; and so, every month, I managed to carry out many times the work I could have done had I not kept all the men glad to follow me. On seven different occasions I spent 162 days in Little Andaman, out of a total of 634 days altogether in the Andamanese Archipelago – all of them given up to Onge research. These trips are recorded
128 in Port Blair Government offices. A few details on the subject are published in the "Bul-
114 letin of the Department of Anthropology", Government of India, starting in Vol. II, No. 1, 1953 (issued in 1956) and extended to other issues. Such papers were hurriedly prepared by me while I was halting in Calcutta on my way from the Andamans to Europe. Press proofs could never be submitted to me; there are, consequently, many misprints, particularly in the figures relating to my Onge Census. The misprints are so obvious that they could only influence a most biased critic: to be discussed in future papers and while my Onge book is in preparation. In Port Blair (South Andaman) I started an Onge Museum with material collected by me. I had the honour of inaugurating it on 6 July, 1953 in the presence of the Chief Commissioner for Andamans and Nicobars, Mr. A. K. Ghosh, one of the kindest and most intelligent Indian gentlemen that it was my pleasure to meet in Asia. On 9 March, 1954 Dr. RAJENDRA PRASAD, President of the Republic of India, also visited the Museum. On that occasion I introduced to him 30 of my Onge friends (wives, husbands and children) in their most natural attire. The President questioned me at length on Onge anthropology and ethnology with the pertinence of a specialist.

123 While in Little Andaman I tried to study all possible aspects of Onge life. I also
[121] tried to count the natives: a very difficult task for they are a nomadic people, ready to vanish into the jungle at any moment. Often I was surrounded by them without seeing a single one. In the darkness of their jungle, the small, black, naked Onge easily disappear. They see us but we do not see them. They can only be counted in their sleeping quarters in communal huts; even so, results are misleading. I found a number of communal huts
[361] in the interior regions of Little Andaman, whereas previously they were said to exist
[126] only on the coast. The larger, more solidly built huts are in the forest. With the help
[178] of my Indian assistants I obtained plans and photographs of all the huts that I saw.
361 Unfortunately the number of Onge communal huts is rapidly diminishing – a very
[24] significant fact. Many are in ruins, many more completely destroyed. Only kitchen-middens and occasional clusters of planted bamboo indicate their former location. Through an interpreter, and with two Onge speaking a little Hindi, I was able to gather information on these and other matters. Direct observation, however, proved the best way of gaining knowledge. In some places there was nothing to help me, and I was compelled to guess about communal huts whose inmates chose to hide in the jungle. Of the many personal
[551] names that I collected I must say that they are reliable only for a short period: the Onge
[553] like to change their names from time to time. All this, in addition to the Onge's nomadic way of life, causes great confusion and makes a proper Census almost impossible. Frequent
[597] changing of names also hinders the establishment of genealogies. Furthermore, the Onge custom of adopting children shifts many of them from one family to another, and adoptive parents invariably claim them as their own offspring. The parents themselves, who are ignorant of numbers, not infrequently forget how many children they have, who these children are and where they are located. It was almost useless to follow previous information concerning communal huts; and so I decided to consider mainly the situation
[114] existing at the time of my visits. The result of my Census may be imperfect, but before criticizing it it would be advisable to know the conditions that prevail in anthropological work among the Onge. Something more than merely counting people, anyhow, was achieved by me in Little Andaman.

In this short paper I am pleased to present a peculiar aspect of Onge life, an aspect that these innocent and once hostile people did not attempt to hide from me, though they also told me nothing about it. Only direct observation could help, and it involved pro-

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Onge

262 immense quantities of it together with pork. I was with them three times when
this recurred, so I could observe their behaviour exhaustively. With their
577 bellies full, the natives rest. Their only activity is body painting, performed by
302 the women on the skin of their peacefully sleeping husbands. Designs change
178 from time to time as I said before, according to the women's inventiveness.
Each family challenges the others in renewing their patterns. The best are later
reproduced until the next change. From year to year I noticed no real evolution
in this rudimentary art, but a cyclical fashion, with temporary preference, in
males and females alike, for some geometrical designs, unconnected with what-
ever kind of food they had been eating. This contradicts the published af-
114 firmations of several authors, who allege that the Andamanese paint special
302 patterns in special colours for different kinds of food. There is nothing more
[262] false, at least with reference to the Onge. Merry feasting, whether on pork
[751] turtle, dugong, fish or honey, leads to a period of rest and body decoration –
[515] always in similar patterns and colours – with the unique purpose of preventing
illness. We might say that painting the body is equal to cleaning it, but this
is quite unintentional. A curious exception to the Onge's filthy habits is the
264 practice of sweeping the floor after solemn banquets in communal huts. The
356 surface of the floor consists of unpacked earth hardened by casual tramping.
342 When it is dry, sweeping raises a heavy dust that fills the hut to the ceiling.
251 It deposits there on the wooden beams where the Onge like to store cooked
262 victuals. So they eat their food, as I said before, coated with dust, no matter
412 how thick. A brush without a handle is used to sweep the floor ; it is 80 cms
long and no thicker than a man's wrist. It is one of the nicest tools made by
the Onge, and consists of strong, hard, elastic palm fibres bound together with
strips of rattan. The dirt is simply thrown out all around the hut, by pushing
356 it under the roof mats that never reach the ground.

These notes offer a first glimpse into a peculiar aspect of Onge life. It is
114 to be deplored that these vanishing people have not yet been exhaustively
studied, notwithstanding their anthropological interest and high biological
significance.

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

241 gave way to the development of agriculture over an extremely limited
563 area in South Andaman — paddy cultivation and coconut plantations have succeeded quite well. The plantations of rubber, tea and coffee also developed in the South Andaman over very small areas but ultimately did not prove very successful, partially due to the lack of adequate care. Simultaneously with the settlement of the refugees, new areas are being brought under plough which had never been interfered with human hands. The growth of agriculture based on rice cultivation together with vegetable gardening, development of orchards, coconut cultivation will bring about self-sufficiency of the islands and make the people self-supporting.

000 Industrial development of any big scale cannot be foreseen except the lumbering industry because of the lack of resources, power and also of any appreciable home market. Besides lumbering, the fishing industry, if properly co-ordinated with the mainland, can be developed to a
[438] great extent. A number of cottage industries based on coconuts, sea and forest products have developed, of which the coirmaking has developed most.

13 The characteristics, common to the tropical islands, are to a large degree manifested in these islands. The physical environment suffers from a number of limitations. Hot and humid climate is ameliorated by the influence of the sea in all parts as none of them are more than 10 miles away from the sea. The problems of soil are quite tremendous and such signs are only discernible to a small extent in the islands which might share greater proportions in the future if adequate measures of careful cultivation are not undertaken. The natural vegetation should be carefully preserved and regenerated after the felling of the trees not only for the conservation of the vegetation but also for saving the soil from the serious consequences of erosion. The
● 178 cultural environment is a mosaic of variety because of the different
433 types of people who have been living in these islands, however negligible
563 their number might be. The imbalance of regional growth, being exclusively confined to the South Andaman, is being removed with the growth of settlement in the other parts of the islands and the indications of the shift in gravity of the economic interests is synchronising with the progress of settlement in the North and Middle Andamans. Mayabunder is handling a greater share in the movement of commodities and passengers. Such changes are undoubtedly very much welcome as the lowering of the disparities in the regional economy and growth speak of an all-round regional development.

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Nicobars AZ 7

The Nicobar group of islands being separated off from the Andaman Islands by the Ten Degree Channel, though constitute a part of the continuation of the island in the north, the geographical entity of these islands are conspicuously different from that of the others. The Nicobar Islands have an area of 635 sq. miles and have 19 islands, out of which 12 islands are inhabited. The human habitats are exceedingly interesting and these people are distinctly different from the aborigines of the Andamans not only in their physical characteristics but also in their cultural attributes. Material life is much more improved and they have been all the time experiencing a healthy growth in comparison to the rapid decay of the Andaman aborigines. Culturally the affinity seems to be closer with the Indonesian islands. Shom Pens, the highlanders of the Great Nicobar, live in perfect isolation and have an extremely primitive economy. The staple crop is coconut and a number of fruit trees and yam are also grown. Some of the islands have become extremely overcrowded and need immediate dispersal to some of the less crowded islands. A detailed geographical treatment would require much more words to say about these thriving people and their contact with the foreigners than those of the Andamans. However it remains incomplete if the study of the Nicobar Islands is not incorporated in that of the Andaman islands. Therefore, in spite of the distinct geographical contrast with the Andamans, a short geographical summary has been given at the end of the book.[1]

131 101 178 241 433 161 000

[1] [not processed. - Analyst]

[p. xvi is blank]

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174 wreck. However, this idea is totally untenable. On the other hand
101 there are sufficient grounds to believe that these aborigines came down from the lower region of Burma. On their arrival at the islands, they moved to the different parts of the islands and very likely, because of the different types of physical environment they developed different traits and as such a few groups of the population are discernible. They are the

(a) The Jarawas,
(b) " Onges,
(c) " Andamanese, and
(d) " Sentinelese.

101 All these groups, though physically akin to each other, have deve-
131 loped different social and economic traits and the ways of earning their food and constructing their shelters are conditioned by their immediate environment. These aborigines who had spread over the different parts of the Great Andamans are experiencing a gradual shrinkage in their areas of command because of the gradual expansion of the areas of the new settlers. The Jarawas are to-day confined to the western part of the South and Middle Andaman, the Andamanese, who are extremely limited in number are along the constal areas, the Onges in the Little Andaman and Rutland Is. and the Sentinelese in the Sentinel islands. The relation of aborigines with the foreign people became one of deep distrust and hostility with some of the groups, especially the Jarawas and the Sentinelese, which has been very rightly explained by M. V. Portman as an outcome of the unfriendly attitude of the foreigners. The Onges and the Andamanese have however become very friendly with the foreigners. The number of the aboriginal population of the Andamans, is undoubtedly a matter of considerable speculation and it is more so in the case of the Jarawas and the Sentinelese whereas, for the Onges and the Andamanese the estimate is fairly correct.

161 The aboriginal population of the Andamans is fast declining in number and there is apprehension that inspite of the best of attempts, the chances of the survival of the aborigines for long ages are extremely limited. Undoubtedly, the aboriginal population of the Andamans is an object of interesting study. Such an interest grows out of its being the only purest negrito group in the world and the modes of their life depict very well the nature of symbiotic relationship existing between
[178] man and environment. Such a primitive economy of hunting and collecting has not changed appreciably inspite of the impact with the foreigners except imbibing some foreign vices.

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Negritos

original type can still be found in the Little Andaman. The similarity of the arrows are also striking and this has been rightly observed by Dr. Cipriani,[1] 'Similarity also with the arrows. This consists of a barbed detachable head connected to the shaft by a string. The harpoon arrow like its near relative and probable forefather, the harpoon spears, offers an interesting question in ethnography. Although the Andamans are widely separated from Malaya and Malaya from the Philippines, the three groups of negritoes have harpoon arrows, while such weapons do not seem to be present in other regions of Asia.' The huts of the Andamanese are also the outcome of further improvements over the original negrito shelter found among the other negrito groups.

In the general habits and the modes of living, a good deal of similarity if not identity is maintained with the other negritoes. But changes and modifications have crept up among the different groups in response to the different environments. Some of the original habits have been totally forgotten and some equipments have been further improved upon or in some cases, totally forgotten. The Jarawas, who are believed to have arrived in the Great Andamans from the South had the knowledge of construction and use of the canoes which served as the means of their movement from the south to the north, have totally forgotten both the construction and use of it.

Though the changes brought about among the Andamanese in response to the environment and time is in no way inconsiderable to give them an impress of individuality, little room for doubt is left that they belong to the big family of the negritoes whose remnants are only found to-day scattered over the different parts of southeast Asia.

Origin of the Andamanese

The presence of such a small group of negritoes in the deep solitude of physical separation from the other countries obviously arouses the question as to how and wherefrom they came. The attributes of the Andamanese, prove very well their affinity with the negrito groups. Much to the curiosity of the observers, the tribal people of the Nicobar Islands do not show any affinity with the Andamanese culturally or materially and such contrasts are important aspects of anthropological study. However, the distribution of the negrito group in these isolated islands have been explained by some as the passage of the people from the Lower reaches of Burma and it is accepted with greater unanimity be-

1 Cipriani, L—On the origin of the Andamanese, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Census of India, 1961.

[113]

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

161 177 evil and are allowed to work such ravages upon life and health of people whose resistance level has already gone quite low.[2] Such a loss of interest in life is common to many of the aboriginal population. The aboriginal population of the Andamans have also been victimised to it and only in one century the aborigines of the Great Andaman Group have almost been wiped out and the Jarawas, in spite of their isolation, have been undergoing considerable decay. The Onges are also suffering from stagnation and decay. There has been the addiction to some of the social poisons e.g. tobacco, alcohol, etc.

The causes of decay of the aboriginal population of the Andamans may be summed up as being the followings:

1. Diseases;

2. Murder of the aborigines by the later settlers, especially the bombardment of the Japanese in the Jarawa infested areas have resulted in a virtual decline of the tribe;

3. Little productive capacity of the aboriginal women.

The sex-ratio in the case of the Onges is quite balanced and therefore, the sex-ratio is not a factor for the decline of the aboriginal population but very little productive capacity of the aboriginal population is undoubtedly a major factor of their decline and it has already been discussed.

178 As regards the material life, however satisfied the aboriginal population may be with their poor lot, it is in most primitive form and the only materials that they have in possession are for earning their livelihood. Cultural aspect is also desiccated with a dearth of richness. No evolution has, however, been observed for deriving much more material comforts and the aborigines with their hard struggle for life hardly find any time to develop their thinking which can lead to a betterment of their cultural and material life.

THE FUTURE

185 These aboriginal population have so far shown little urge for improving their own lot and in the absence of such attempts, the chances of their betterment as well as survival is a far cry. The only means of improving their lot seems to be possible through the efforts of the Government. The attempts for bringing the aborigines in a short period within the folds of an advanced economy and society have proved futile and contrary to it, the attempts of segregating the aboriginal population, as done in the

2 Nigam, R. C.—Little known tribes of the Andaman Islands—Their problems & prospects; Vol. VIII, April, 1960. No. 2.

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The Onges are the most numerous of the three peoples surviving in the Andamans. Vigorous and apparently full of promise for the future they may well offer a suitable field for the application of eugenic measures designed to increase their numbers; this would be impossible with the Jarawas owing to their hostility towards outsiders, and the few remaining Arioto are nearly all of impure stock. If their confidence could be gained, it might be possible to encourage inter-marriage between the various groups, in the hope that fertility would increase and the ultimate total extinction of Onges, Jarawas and Arioto, would be prevented.

In the Andamanese, this physiological decline has been accompanied by cultural decadence, as my digs in the kitchen-middens all over the archipelago showed. The ancient pottery which came to light is proof enough; when one compares it with recent work the latter is indicative of secondary and not original primitiveness. The successive strata in the deposits show a gradual decline from earthenware clearly made from a very refined mix to crude ware with vegetable impurities and bits of stone left in the clay. The pots dating from ancient times were clearly well fired and the quality of the clay allowed them to have thin but nevertheless very strong walls. In the present-day ware, on the other hand, the wall has to be thick because of the coarseness of the clay, making the pots both heavy and easily broken. Moreover, firing is limited to drying the pots in the sun, and the clay is in fact only hardened when the pot is used for cooking.

Ignorance of fire-making in the Andamans may also stem from this cultural regression, as one of the effects of physiological and psychological decadence. Given the absence of magico-religious beliefs among the Andamanese, ignorance of fire-making cannot be attributed to any ritual taboo or veto. On the other hand, it is in sharp contrast to the possession of elements of cultural advance such as the bow, with highly developed arrows, the harpoon with its detachable point, and the outrigger canoe.

Few races are known, even in far distant times, which never had fire. *Sinanthropus* and nearly every fossil Man after him had fire, even if he was unable to create it and could only preserve it once received from some natural combustion. The Onges, while retaining a number of ethnic characteristics of the Palaeolithic era, have

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also acquired more recent additions, so that any primitive ignorance on their part of an art so ancient and generally advantageous as that of making fire is hardly credible. One thing is, however, certain: they do not today know how to produce fire.

In order to explain their ignorance, one must remember the surprising speed with which primitive peoples forget even essential facts, even details of their own life. They can forget their father's or mother's name, or both, and important events of less than fifty years ago are sometimes forgotten by those who took part in them. Cultural regression following the forgetting of ethnographical facts, even essential facts such as the making of fire, is a phenomenon widespread in every continent. Widely differing elements of culture spread out from a number of centres and were forced to adapt to natural surroundings often incomparably different from the centre from which they spread. Sometimes these cultural migrations led to progress, but more often to regression. Particularly in the marginal areas furthest from the centres of culture, enforced modifications were profound, with ensuing cultural impoverishment. The Andamanese, probably arriving from areas to the east, remain as survivors of a series of disasters both biological and non-biological, in one of the marginal areas which, although a natural paradise, has been most affected by adverse circumstances. It is, therefore, hardly surprising if, like the Eskimos, they no longer reflect the brilliance of the past, either biologically or culturally. A similar situation is to be found in populations much larger and more advanced than the Andamanese.

It is not strictly accurate to define the Onges as primitive; they should more properly be regarded as involuted. They possess certain essentials which almost entitle them to recognition as a civilized people: religious concepts are not unknown, they bury their dead, they are monogamous, and they have their own language. While they are unable to produce fire they can preserve it and know how to use it, they make excellent bows, arrows, harpoons and canoes, and they know how to produce pottery.

Nevertheless, they have no agriculture, and do not keep domestic animals except the dog, introduced only within living memory and to them a faithful friend. They have no idea of the use of metals, and make no stone implements apart from the tiny splinters used for shaving. They have never developed any graphic arts and have

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It is clear from this that when they first arrived in the Andamans, the Negritos had no pottery; there are no signs of it at all in the lowest levels. Before they acquired the use of earthenware, perhaps for centuries, they baked their shellfish in ashes, so that the shells became calcified; but as time went on they came to boil them, as the islanders still do today. There is a clear distinction between the ashy, fragile, almost fossilized appearance of the former, and the cleaner solidity of the latter.

In the lowest level in which it appears, the pottery shows signs of careful working of the clay and good firing, degenerating towards more recent times. The uppermost layers reveal the crudest ware, the clay being impure, carelessly mixed, with bits of stone in it and hardly fired at all; it appears to have been merely dried by exposure to the sun and hardened in the course of normal use, as the Onges do today. The resulting pots break easily, despite their thickness, in contrast to the thinner, but much stronger, walls of earlier pottery. They were built up by the coil technique, exactly as they are made on Chowra, the one island in the Nicobars which specializes in pottery.

On Great Nicobar, among the Shom-Pen, these exists also another, cruder type of pottery which is made by a very primitive method. A basket is covered with clay, and hardened in the fire without being properly fired; fragments of this type of pottery retain the marks of the basket inside. The kitchen-middens of the Andamans contain no traces of any primitive stage of this kind; instead, a somewhat refined form of earthenware appears suddenly. There are traces of ornamentation, rows of small lines, usually roughly parallel. No such ornamentation appears on the crude ware of more recent date, however.

Andamanese pots have always been made with a pointed base which prevents their standing upright, so that they have to be carried in baskets, exactly like those of the Shom-Pen, who make their pots in complete ignorance of the Andamanese and Chowra pottery.

Pottery did not form part of the culture of the Negritos of ancient times. Neither the Semang of Malacca nor the Aetà of the Philippines, their last remnants, nor the Andamanese, had any. The custom of hollowing out logs for use as vessels, and the continuing use of the earth oven, doubtless made the absence of any pottery no hardship.

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among the Onges) of wearing not only necklaces of the carpals and tarsals of deceased kin or pieces of rib, but also, in some groups, the skulls, painted with ochre and hanging from a cord round the neck. The long bones, painted red and white, were reburied in the communal hut. The Onges of today carry only the coloured jawbones of their kin.

No ornaments were found in the middens, nor did we expect to find any, as at death the Onges (and presumably their ancestors) bury all the personal objects of the deceased secretly in the forest, where the termites destroy all traces.

Not all the Arioto can have carried skulls and jawbones. Some clearly carried neither, as all the bones are sometimes found in the middens. A few middens are completely without human bones, particularly in the Port Blair area. Nevertheless at Ciauldari (or Chowldary), ten kilometres to the west, I found in January 1954 long bones without the skull or jawbones, and at Maya Bandar in 1953 I saw almost complete skeletons, not in anatomical position, owing to exhumation and reburial, but including skull, jawbones and in a number of cases the small bones as well.

The evidence of the middens thus clearly shows that burial and subsequent customs differed considerably among the various groups of islanders in the past, as they do today. The majority, judging from the Onges, seem to have remained faithful to a given custom, the dead in all cases continuing to remain a part of the group, whether or not any particular bone was carried about by the members of the group.

It is somewhat surprising to find customs varying so markedly in so primitive and numerically small a population, even though isolated in groups. The explanation lies in the fact that long-established customs may be altered overnight as the result of a 'revelation' by some seer, only to have the new customs overthrown themselves in the course of time by the next 'revelation'. I had an experience of this in the Onges when Enagaghe, a well-known seer, announced one day that he had received an order from the spirits about the way in which hunting trophies were to be displayed. No longer were pig jawbones to be impaled one behind the other on poles hung horizontally along the sloping roof of the hut a little above the hunter's bed. The whole skull, including the jawbones, was to be preserved, the bones held together in their natural

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position by reed cords, which were to be tied in front of the snout, ending in a cord by which the skull was to be hung above the hunter's bed. No sooner said than done, and at the beginning of 1954 all the old trophies were thrown out into the forest, to be gradually replaced by the new ones. Fortunately I had collected some of the old trophies before the 'revelation'!

From the evidence of the middens it would appear that these variations in burial customs have no practical basis, and probably all derive from similar 'revelations'. Further investigations in a large series of the deposits, enabling dated comparisons to be made, would be extremely revealing.

Even allowing for these sudden alterations in established customs, it is clear that their elaboration indicates slow and hardly perceptible development over long periods of time and the middens must be dated in millennia. The hypothesis put forward by some scholars that the Andamanese are descended from negro slaves who escaped while on their way to the Portuguese colonies in India in the sixteenth or, at the earliest, fifteenth centuries, seems therefore quite untenable, in face of the abundant evidence in favour of the great antiquity of the middens and of the people who built them up.

It seems clear that during the last few thousand years, successive waves of migration have taken place over a whole area bounded on the west by the Andamans and Nicobars. All indications point to a close connection between the Andamanese and the peoples to the westward, the Negrito element remaining alone and almost untouched in the Andamans, but becoming submerged in the Nicobars into the mongoloid element of more recent origin. Even today a number of Nicobarese show signs of Negrito ancestry; short in stature, they have crinkly hair which although long is very different from the straight black hair of the mongoloid element, and their heads, noses and lips bear clear signs of Negrito ancestry.

In addition to these more general conclusions the middens also cast some light on the origin, still somewhat problematical, of the wretched Jarawas of Great Andaman. Comparisons between their middens and those of the Onges show that there were in the past communal huts on Great Andaman exactly the same as those still extant today on Little Andaman.

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The continual fighting between the Eremtaga and the Arioto led, as we have seen, to the gradual disappearance of the communal huts of the latter as being too vulnerable. Subsequently, the conflict still going on between foreigners and Jarawas completed the destruction, so that there are now no communal huts on Great Andaman. The ever-increasing violence of the punitive expeditions against the Jarawas put an end to their numerical recovery during the last fifteen years or so, and there may indeed now be none left. Today only their kitchen-middens, and the surviving Onges, remain to show us how the Jarawas must have lived.

The Jarawa middens are distinguishable from those of the Arioto by their inland position and by their content of freshwater shellfish and land gasteropods, not eaten by the peoples of the coast.

Like the kitchen-middens of the Onges, those of the Jarawas contain human bones clearly interred in graves, and not scattered among the refuse. This refutes the Arioto accusation against the Eremtaga of cannibalism, and that of the people of South Andaman (now vanished) against the people of North Andaman and the Onges; the remains of cannibal feasts would undoubtedly have been found among kitchen refuse and not carefully buried in the ritual manner, with the graves filled in with earth. And the Jarawas and the majority of the Arioto buried their dead in the communal huts, continuing a custom which originated while they were still on Little Andaman. In time variations arose, but this does not alter the evidence in favour of migration in ancient times from the south, via the Nicobars and Little Andaman.

The differences in culture between the islands can be explained by the ease with which primitive peoples forget. The Jarawas, for example, although they reached Great Andaman by sea from Little Andaman, forgot in a few generations the art of hollowing canoes when they were forced to live in the depths of the forests, far from the sea. Today, they have been free from the Arioto for some time, at least on the west coast, and have access to the sea, but they have not started building canoes again. In other things, however, such as burial rites, the Jarawas kept faithful to the old Onge customs; their middens show the same exhumation of the bones, the same cleaning, and tinting with ochre, and careful reburial.

The general similarity of the middens in Great and Little Andaman cannot be due to chance. Animal food, for example, has clearly

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of growth of the kitchen-middens), judging by the number of shells in the deposits. On Great Andaman, on the other hand, the Jarawas, unable to keep dogs for fear of revealing their whereabouts with the barking, continued as they had always done, and the gradual disappearance of their middens was due not to any change in eating habits but to the breakdown of the communal hut system. Among the Arioto, already decimated for over a century by fighting with the Eremtaga, the dog seems to have had no effect on the situation, as the Arioto had dogs as far back as 1857. Possibly they regarded them in the same way as the Onges who, though deeply attached to them and quite incapable of eating them at any time, never go so far as to bury their bones in the middens; the carcase is thrown out into the forests for the monitors and the termites to dispose of. It is also probable that the introduction of the dog came too late, when the Arioto were already too depleted numerically for any change in their eating habits to be appreciably reflected in their middens.

In both Great and Little Andaman the middens are found only where the communal huts have been constantly rebuilt on the same sites. Where the ground permits, the base circle (or rarely, the ellipse) has been moved somewhat from side to side, without, however, greatly affecting the regularity of the shape. At Totamaddalù on Little Andaman I was interested to see that although the diameter of the midden lessened as the numbers of the group occupying the hut dwindled, the site remained unchanged. Today the base area of the midden is very extensive compared with the size of the hut now built on it, but its anthropological value is thereby increased.

The advent of the dog into the archipelago in about 1857 vastly increased the amount of meat available to the Andamanese. Once introduced into Little Andaman[1] the dog population increased explosively, as the Onges dare not kill any of the pups; the women even go so far as to suckle motherless pups themselves. This inordinate love of dogs has allowed the animals to become a pest. They already considerably outnumber the human population; families of only three or four people may have ten or twelve dogs,

[1] The dog reached Little Andaman only at the beginning of the present century; von Eichstedt in 1928 noted that the Onges had very few of them.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

All the evidence points to this being far more than mere supposition and even today the Onges persist in their tendency to expand towards the north. In 1953 I could find no trace of a number of Onges whom I had known in 1952; the others told me they were all 'dead', but it seems probable that they had migrated to the islands further north. And in 1954 nearly all the canoes belonging to the communal huts in the south-west of Little Andaman, which I had seen in 1953, had vanished and were said to have gone with the 'dead'. It is probable that they too had migrated to Great Andaman, becoming 'Jarawas'.

This is physically quite possible. Between Little Andaman and Great Andaman the Onges have a line of transit camps, still in use, where food and water are easily available. All have a name, and I followed the line myself. With the help of their fragile but very fast canoes, and without carrying food or water (which they know will be available at the next transit camp), they can travel very quickly. They take fire with them in the canoes in the form of a burning torch and while they are at sea, unlike the lazy pace of their normal attitude to life, they seem possessed by the desire to reach the next stopping point on terra firma.

Moreover, one may deduce from the fact that the names of these transit camps are all in the Onge language that the migrations have always been from south to north. Little Andaman, formed as it is mainly of coral banks and only projecting a short way above the sea, disappears from view in the tropical mists a few kilometres from the shore; from Rutland it is invisible, and as the Andamanese only travel by sea with land in sight or when its existence and direction is well known, no one from the north would have dared to travel south into the unknown.

We have already seen that the ignorance of the present-day Jarawas as regards the sea is no bar to a hypothesis of their original arrival in Great Andaman by sea. Colebrook, a hundred and fifty years ago, actually saw them with canoes, and Gilbert Rogers[1] recorded seeing canoes on the coasts of North Sentinel very similar to those of the Onges today. The accumulation, therefore, of this evidence and the general similarity of culture throughout the archipelago all adds up to inescapable conclusions.

Even the unique dances enjoyed by the Onges are to be seen

[1] *Andaman and Nicobar Gazetteer*, 2 January 1904.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

kitchen-middens to have been contemporaneous with the introduction of the pig, i.e. to have been introduced by outsiders. It would be possible, using radio carbon methods, to calculate this date more accurately, but on purely archaeological evidence the introduction of pottery would appear to have occurred some five thousand years ago.

8 ABSENCE OF CANNIBALISM

If we may accept the evidence of the kitchen-middens, there has never at any time been cannibalism in the Andamans, although the practice certainly existed in the later Palaeolithic era; the Andamanese must thus have been isolated in the archipelago long before the practice became widespread.

9 DRINK

The Andamanese ignorance of any drink other than water may be regarded as additional evidence of the great antiquity of their culture.

10 ABSENCE OF CLOTHING

The Jarawas of both sexes have always remained completely naked. The Onges have only in comparatively recent times adopted a form of genital covering for their womenfolk; this custom has spread as far as the north of Great Andaman, and it seems probable that the separation of the Jarawas from the Onges dates from this time.

11 ABSENCE OF TATTOOING

All primitive peoples who are habitually completely naked adorn the body in some way. The Onges have never progressed beyond the early stage of painting themselves with ochre, and do not tattoo. Their sole ornaments are small necklaces of tusk shells, strips of bark, and sometimes flowers. In all this they resemble the Tasmans (see, however, p. 143 for certain important differences), who seem to have remained in an equally early stage of cultural development.

12 TOTEMISM AND THE CLAN

Here again the complete absence of any traces appears to indicate isolation before the spread of these very ancient concepts. Neither the Onges nor the Jarawas have ever progressed beyond the stage of independent groups of families.